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# Why your body does not "snap back" after childbirth

by Marianne Ryan PT, OCS

After the excitement of childbirth, first-time moms are often shocked to discover that their bodies don't automatically snap back into shape immediately after their baby is born. The first thing I remember after I got home with my new baby was looking sideways in a mirror and gasping...I still looked pregnant! Was I ever going to see a flat tummy again!?!

## How come celebrities look so good after childbirth?

Expecting yourself to be "red-carpet ready" soon after delivering your baby is unrealistic for the normal everyday gal. In truth, it's not even normal for celebrities.

In this article, I will share 5 tips for caring for your body right after childbirth. But first I would like to explain why your body doesn't just "snap back together," especially during the first 4 to 6 weeks after having your baby.



It will take time for your belly to shrink no matter who you are. Realistically, it takes at least a month for your body to start to get itself back together, usually longer for most women. Right after birth your body is left with a lot of excess fluid that can take a week or two to lose and it can take a full month for your uterus to shrink back down to its pre-pregnancy size. So don't put yourself under the pressure to be "Facebook ready" two days after you deliver your baby – it's just not going to happen and you have far more important things to worry about!

Why does it seem that celebrity moms look better faster? It's true that most can afford a lot of extra help, but more importantly, they take postpartum recovery seriously. You may not be able to afford a full-time nanny, nighttime baby nurse, personal trainer, and a cook, but you too can take your own recovery seriously. So put aside all your pregnancy books and let your own postpartum needs come front and center.

### Here are my 5 top tips for getting back in shape once your baby has arrived:

- 1. Do not lift anything heavier than your newborn baby for the first 6 weeks after childbirth.** This is a time to get help with household tasks and lifting a toddler.
- 2. Avoid activities that put pressure on your abdomen such as getting out of bed by doing a sit up.** Instead, get out of bed by rolling over onto your side and swinging your legs over the side of the bed before sitting up.
- 3. Breathe.** Whenever you lift something heavy such as a grocery bag, or a large pot of pasta, EXHALE to reduce the strain on your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles.
- 4. Most women can start to do gentle Kegel exercises** the day after childbirth. Exhale gently each time you contract your pelvic floor muscles. Make sure to get medical clearance from your doctor or midwife first.

**5. Try to start a walking program as soon as possible.** Once you have been given the green light to get out of bed, try to start with 2 or 3 ten-minute walks and gradually build up to a 30-minute walk per day.

Most women want to get back into pre-pregnancy shape immediately after childbirth, but it is important to make a slow return to full activity. If you follow these 5 simple tips during the first 4 to 6 weeks after childbirth they will help you to get your Baby Bod back into pre-pregnancy shape.

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Marianne is a physical therapist and board-certified orthopedic clinical specialist. She is the owner and clinical director of Marianne Ryan Physical Therapy in New York City. Ryan is the award winning author of the number one bestselling book, *Baby Bod - Turn Flab into Fab in 12 Weeks Flat*. She taught at both Columbia University School of Nursing, and New York University. Ryan is a former spokesperson for the American Physical Therapy Association. A much sought-after media guest, Marianne has appeared on dozens of national TV and radio shows, and has also been featured in *Red Book*, *Fitness Magazine*, *USA Today*, *Shape Magazine* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

To receive a free preview of her book, go to [www.BabyBodBook.com](http://www.BabyBodBook.com).

